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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9903
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1152
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 0225
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3801
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1628
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 8622
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 6858
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4934
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2986
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 4895
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4001
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9251
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 6561
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 1102
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3484
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER), SCA/INS AND PRM
STATE ALSO PASS USAID
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)
ATHENS FOR PCARTER
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 64

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432 J) Colombo 425 K) Colombo 418 and previous

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and British Foreign Secretary David Miliband conducted a one-day visit to Sri Lanka on April 29. They urged the Government to end hostilities in the North; however President Mahinda Rajapaksa and Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa rebuffed the request. The Sri Lankan Navy claims it destroyed several LTTE "Sea Tiger" boats in an April 29 sea battle. OCHA reports over 170,000 civilians have reached Government-controlled territory since late October, and the UN estimates some 50,000 to 80,000 could still be trapped by the conflict. END SUMMARY.

BRITISH AND FRENCH DELEGATION

2. (SBU) British Foreign Secretary David Miliband and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner arrived in Sri Lanka on April 29 for a one-day visit. They met with civilians living in camps, and toured a French-donated field hospital at Cheddikulum in Vavuniya, and met with President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa and Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama. Miliband publicly urged officials for an end to the war: "Now is the time for the fighting to stop. Sri Lanka's military advances have been spectacular, but winning the peace is as vital as winning the war." Minister Kouchner appeared skeptical that the Government would heed

the call for an end to the fighting: "We insisted, and we insisted, but it is up to our friends to allow it or not." Local press reported that the Government officials responded to the delegation that the "operation to free Tamil civilians held hostage by the LTTE would continue unabated." Bogollagama repeated the Government's commitment to return of 80% of displaced civilians to their homes in the North by the end of 2009. Detailed readout of the visit is reported septel.

¶3. (U) Environment and Natural Resources Minister Champika Ranawaka assailed the goals of the delegation at a rally of ultra-nationalist party Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU - which also led the demonstration outside the British High Commission on April 29). He termed the US and other members of the Co-Chairs group as the "Terrorist Chairs" for their purported defense of LTTE. He further stated, "We also wish to remind Bernard Kouchner of France the fall of Dien Bien Phu in 1953. If he has forgotten that lesson France learnt in former French Indo-China the Sinhala majority here can remind him of it."

BATTLE AT SEA

¶4. (SBU) The Sri Lankan military reported a battle at sea against the LTTE "Sea Tigers" off the coast of the no-fire zone. On the morning of April 29, LTTE cadres began firing on Sri Lankan Army positions along the coast within the no-fire zone. The Sri Lankan Navy responded, and Sea Tigers sent an additional 10-12 small fast-attack craft. The Sri Lankan Navy claimed they killed 25 LTTE cadres in the ensuing battle, and destroyed four LTTE suicide craft laden with high explosives and two attack craft mounted with high

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caliber weapons.

UPDATE ON HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

¶5. (U) The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported on April 29 that 171,184 persons have crossed into Government-controlled territory since late October. OCHA reports 152,671 are located in sites in Vavuniya, 11,089 are in Jaffna, and smaller numbers are in Trincomalee, Mannar, and other locations. Included in this total are nearly 12,000 persons evacuated by sea by the International Committee of the Red Cross since February 11. UNHCR reports the Government is no longer considering placing internally-displaced persons (IDPs) in Mannar but is now looking into the possibility of moving up to 20,000 IDPs to Trincomalee and 20,000 to Jaffna to decongest sites in Vavuniya. The Government has opened up a site IV at Manik Farms to ease overcrowded conditions at schools currently used as transit sites. The Australian Government has pledged an additional \$3M in humanitarian aid to assist IDPs in the North. The UN estimates that 50,000 to 80,000 civilians could still be trapped by the conflict.

RETURNS IN MUSALI

¶6. (U) UNHCR confirmed the April 29 return of 411 IDPs to homes in Musali Division of Mannar district. These civilians had been displaced by the conflict over two years ago. They will receive tarpaulin shelter kits, jungle clearing tools, mosquito nets, mats, water containers and hurricane lamps from UNHCR to assist their return.

REPORTED CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

¶7. (SBU) ICRC reported heavy fighting in the safe zone April 28-29. Tamil sources report "very heavy shell attacks and cannon attacks" within the safe zone on April 28-29, including on a makeshift hospital. These sources report 278 civilians were killed and 298 were injured. (Note: Such reports from Tamil sources cannot be confirmed and are frequently exaggerated.)

MOORE